



Department of Justice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MONDAY, APRIL 24, 2006

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FEDERAL JURY RETURNS GUILTY VERDICTS
IN DRUG AND PROSTITUTION RING

Four Charlotte Men Face Possibility of Life Imprisonment

CHARLOTTE, NC - A federal jury sitting in Charlotte U.S. District Court on Friday, April 21, 2006, returned verdicts of guilty as to defendants Tracy McDaniel Howard, David L. Howard, and Nicholas Jermaine Ragin, all of Charlotte, North Carolina for their participation in a prostitution conspiracy that involved female juvenile runaways. The three were found guilty of conspiracy to commit coercion and enticement of women, including juveniles, to engage in prostitution, as well as conspiracy to possess with the intent to distribute over 50 grams of crack cocaine (cocaine base) following a three-week federal jury trial in U.S. District Court in Charlotte before the Honorable Robert J. Conrad, Jr., presiding judge. A fourth defendant, Oscar Mario Solano-Sanchez, was also found guilty of drug conspiracy.

According to testimony introduced at trial, this criminal enterprise operated a prostitution and drug organization in Charlotte which used female juvenile runaways as young as 14 years of age. Testimony during trial described how Tracy and David Howard would force young girls to have sexual intercourse with Hispanics at numerous apartment complexes throughout Charlotte. Juvenile witnesses testified that they would have sexual intercourse with as many as seven to ten men a night at certain Charlotte apartment complexes, and that Defendants Tracy and David

Howard would charge Hispanic customers at the apartment complexes \$25 for fifteen minutes with the girls. In addition, testimony described how these same young girls, as well as other women, were sent on “calls” throughout North and South Carolina to engage in acts of prostitution for the Charlotte escort service doing business as “Fantasia” and “Discreet Delight” (and other escort service names used during the course of the conspiracy). According to victim testimony by many of the young girls used during the prostitution conspiracy, they were allowed to go on calls through the escort service rather than working the apartment complexes. Official court testimony revealed that the escort service was operated by Ila Howard, the mother of Tracy and David Howard, and was located on N. Tryon Street in Charlotte. Further victim testimony revealed that one of the ways the girls were punished was they were sent back to work in the apartment complexes. The girls also received frequent beatings as punishment, according to trial testimony.

Further, evidence during trial focused on 301 Eastway, Charlotte, NC, also known as “Little Mexico,” where this criminal enterprise distributed multiple kilograms of crack cocaine throughout 2004, prior to the area being demolished by the City of Charlotte in the fall 2004 due to “third world country” living conditions. In addition, evidence introduced during trial included the use of some of the young girls to package and distribute the crack cocaine in “Little Mexico.” There was also testimony related to shootouts during the course of the prostitution and drug conspiracies, and Defendant Tracy Howard was also convicted of possession of a firearm in furtherance of drug trafficking.

According to Assistant United States Attorneys Karen S. Marston and Craig D. Randall, who handled the case for the government, this case involved a two-year investigation undertaken

jointly by federal agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and the Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department / Violent Crimes Unit.

“This case demonstrated how devastating prostitution, drug trafficking, and gun toting can be for the Charlotte community,” said U.S. Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert. “The victims were preyed upon by individuals with no regard for their dignity,” she added. “This verdict underscores our continuing commitment to vindicate the rights of vulnerable victims.”

Shappert was joined in today’s announcement by Zebedee T. Graham, Special Agent in Charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives for North and South Carolina, and Darrel Stephens, Chief of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department.

Three additional defendants also charged in the same federal bill of indictment, Ila Mae Howard, Keshia Lynn Burris, and Eugene William Lewis, earlier entered guilty pleas to charges set out in the indictment.

Defendants Tracy Howard, David Howard, Nicholas Ragin and Oscar Mario Solano-Sanchez, each face a mandatory minimum of at least ten years imprisonment and up to a maximum of life imprisonment.

United States Attorney Shappert praised the work of Assistant U. S. Attorneys Karen S. Marston and Craig D. Randall, Special Agent Terry Tadeo of ATF, Sergeant Katherine Scheimreif, Detectives John Fish and Scott Maxfield of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department / Violent Crime Unit.

Tracy McDaniel Howard
DOB: 1/16/82
Address: 5300 Grenelefe Village Road
Charlotte, NC
Status: Tried/Convicted/Awaiting Sentencing

David Leonarde Howard

DOB: 9/22/80
Address: 3793 Michigan Avenue
Charlotte, NC
Status: Tried/Convicted/Awaiting Sentencing

Nicholas Jermaine Ragin

DOB: 7/28/80
Address: 5852 Monroe Road, A1
Charlotte, NC
Status: Tried/Convicted/Awaiting Sentencing

Oscar Mario Solano-Sanchez

DOB: 3/10/59
Address: 301 Eastway, Apartment 5
Charlotte, NC
Status: Tried/Convicted/Awaiting Sentencing

Eugene William Lewis

DOB: 1/21/80
Address: 5852 Monroe Road A1
Charlotte, NC
Status: Pled/Awaiting Sentencing

Ila Mae Howard

DOB: 10/25/63
Address: 5300 Grenelefe Road
Charlotte, NC
Status: Pled/Awaiting Sentencing

Keshia Lynn Burris

DOB: 4/19/55
Address: 1040 Brookrun Drive
Charlotte, NC
Status: Pled/Awaiting Sentencing

Sentencing dates for the defendants have not yet been announced.

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